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**July 2008  
E-Newsletter**

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### **BEER SURVEY SAYS . . .**

The polls were open for two months and the results in Assembly District 24 are overwhelming: Nearly three-quarters of respondents support raising the excise tax on beer to help fund health, law enforcement, and treatment and prevention programs.

Fifty-three percent said the tax should be raised to 33 cents per can; the current tax is two cents per 12 ounce can. Twenty-three percent favored raising the tax to 25 cents per can. Six percent endorsed a 15 cents per can levy and another 6 percent supported a 10 cents increase. Twelve percent were in favor of a nickel per can increase.

This unscientific survey indicates that many of my constituents agree with my proposal to raise the beer tax to recover some of the billions spent by taxpayers for the costs of alcohol-related fatalities, assaults, accidents, and public property damage.

My proposal isn't just about making the beer industry help pay for the fallout beer and alcohol wreaks on our society. It is about prevention; reducing under-age drinking and stopping minors from developing dangerous life-long drinking habits that could endanger their health and careers.

One out of five people between 12 and 20 years old has engaged in binge drinking - consuming five drinks or more on at least one occasion during the past month, according to a report on underage drinking released last month by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The report estimated 9.4 percent of the people in that age category "met the diagnostic criteria for an alcohol use disorder (dependence or abuse) in the past year."

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This month, I will introduce a constitutional amendment to raise the beer tax and secure its revenue exclusively for emergency room and trauma care, law enforcement, school counseling, mental health services and treatment, victim assistance, prevention programs, and marketing research to counter the beer industry's powerful ad machine.

When I announced my proposal in April, it struck a nerve up and down the state. The survey received responses not only from my district but many came from cities outside the Bay Area including Bakersfield, Hollywood, Yuba City, Ojai, Indio, and San Diego.

The survey drew a total of 154 responses from inside and outside my district from April 25 to June 25. The votes were evenly split: 77 in favor and 77 against. However, my district constituents strongly favored this tax.

The aggregate totals showed that of those who support the tax, more than half -- 56 percent -- recommended increasing the tax on a 12-ounce can of beer by 33 cents; 18 percent supported a 25-cent increase; 4 percent supported a 15-cent increase; 11 percent supported a 10-cent increase; and another 11 percent supported a five-cent increase. The current state tax on a 12-ounce can is two cents.

Replying to our question -- "At what age did you take your first alcoholic drink?" -- the respondents said more than three-fourths of them took their first swig before they were 21. About 23 percent said they downed their first drink when they were 14 or younger; 55.6 percent said they were 15 to 20; and almost 22 percent said they were 21 or older.

Asked how many cans, bottles or glasses of beer they drank each week, 45 percent said they do not drink beer; 33 percent said they drink one to four cans; 15 percent said they drink five to nine; 4 percent said they drink 10 to 15; and 3 percent said they downed 18 to 20.

Amid the dozens of comments - pro and con - about the beer tax, there was one particularly gripping comment that I wanted to share. It came from Howard Hoff Jr., of San Jose, who wrote about alcohol's affect on his family:

"First, I have a daughter who is an alcoholic.

"Second, I have a brother who died from drinking.

"Third, I have a cousin who lost three-fourths of her liver.

"So, I would support anything that would help control the excessive drinking and support programs to help alcoholics to stop drinking."

## BEAT THE HEAT!

The City of San Jose will open community Cooling Centers when temperatures are forecast to rise above 95 degrees. These air-conditioned centers also plan to provide drinking water, snacks, movies, games and activities for children. For more information contact the San Jose Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services at 408-277-2741.

Here's a list of the cooling centers (asterisk denotes centers located within Assembly District 24):

- Almaden Community Center, 6445 Camden Ave., 408-268-1133
- Berryessa Community Center, 3050 Berryessa Road, 408-251-6392\*
- Camden Community Center, 3369 Union Ave., 408-559-8553\*
- Evergreen Community College, 4860 San Felipe Road, 408-270-2220
- George Shirakawa Community Center, 2072 Lucretia Ave., 408-277-3317
- Gardner Community Center, 520 W. Virginia St., 408-277-4761
- Hank Lopez Community Center, 1694 Adrian Way, 408-251-2850
- Southside Community Center, 5585 Cottle Road, 408-629-3336\*
- Willows Senior Center, 2175 Lincoln Ave., 408-448-6400\*
- West San Jose Community Center, 3707 Williams Road, 408-249-6580\*